Ginnochio: Wofford's resident authority

By Charles Livingston
Features Editor

Hundreds of experts, authors, filmmakers, and witnesses have stated that they have solved without a shadow of a doubt the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Associate Professor of sociology Dr. Gerald Ginocchio, on the other hand, admits that he does not know who did it. If you want to discuss the topic, though, he will be quite happy to present you with the volumes of hard facts that he has acquired over his ten year study of the subject.

Ginocchio's credibility on the issue is solidified by his stance. Wild theories are not his game — he is concerned with the indisputable facts surrounding the murder. "I don't consider myself [an expert]," he says. "I think I've been very fortunate in connecting with what I consider to be more responsible, credible people — not wild-eyed conspiracy theorists."

He continues, "I put myself in a category with about a half dozen others who have spent time examining the official story as carefully as possible. What gives me special insight is my association with Harold Weisberg, who, among all the critics, has been one of the few who has successfully sued the government years ago to get suppressed documents and he's been very open with me in allowing me to copy anything and getting a much better view of what transpired through that."

Communications Office photo

Oliver Stone's 1991 film, *JFK*, served to rekindle Americans' curiosity in the assassination, as well as spark media interest in Ginocchio. He was the subject of several articles that appeared in local newspapers. In addition, he made three appearances on on the SCETV program "Open Line" and one appearance on Bill Drake's radio program, "Speaking of Spartanburg" (WSPA-AM). Although he has serious reservations about the credibility of Stone's film, he now says that he has gained an appreciation of the film's entertainment value. In addition, he acknowledges that the movie did serve to "smoke out" some of the real people involved. They came forward and told their stories again, and were caught once again telling errant lies.

Since the last group of interviews, Ginocchio has been working to profile Arlen Specter, an assistant counsel on the Warren commission and one of the chief architects of the single bullet theory. Though he believes that there was more than one person involved in the assassination, he has found that the facts simply do not support the wild conjectures of a massive conspiracy like Stone's. This fundamental discord of theory led to him to conduct an interim in 1993 in which he explored the possibilities with his students.

Now, outside stimulation has drawn media attention to the controversy again. Gerald Posner's book, "Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK," was featured prominently in the August 30 edition of *U.S. News and World Report.* Ginocchio contests that like most other JFK assassination books, it is fraudulent. In particular, he cites the author's complete fabrication of testimonies such as that of Rosemary Willis ("The Girl in Red"), among numerous other omissions and errors of fact.

In fact, he groups Posner in with Stone and the Warren Commission in that they are all guilty of picking, choosing, and distorting facts in order support their already-contrived theories. In addition, he asserts that

on JFK

most conspiracy theorists arrive at their conclusions through their fascination with a peculiar and minute angle on the case. They chose (and even distort) only the facts that support their theory, then run it into the ground.

Though he has established in his research a myriad of hard facts, his study corroborates the following:

- that the Warren Commission's conclusions are not credible
- that the crime was beyond the capabilities of any one person
- and, that the people who issued the Warren Report knew it was false.

Though Stone's film makes it appear that almost all information regarding the case has been buried by the U.S. government, Ginocchio estimates that 98 per cent of the Warren Commission files have been in the public domain for the past 25 years.

It is therefore not, according to Ginocchio, cloak-and-dagger secrets that keep up the public interest in the controversy. It was the Warren Commission's faulty investigation. "I'm fairly convinced," he says,"that had the Warren Commission done a truly objective and public investigation, and had released its findings in such a way that they were accessible to the American people, I don't think we would have seen [the sensationalistic obsession with conspiracy theories]."

He has stated in past interviews that he does not believe that the American public will ever know exactly what happened and exactly who was involved. He even doubts anyone in Washington knows the whole truth.

He moves on, therefore, trying to shed light on one of the darkest events in our country's history. However, he recoils at the word "buff." He says, "Whatever I collect and whatever I do, I'm doing it in an effort to set the record straight. I think it's important that the American people know that they continue to be lied to, and that we haven't reached a position of honesty with respect to the controversy."

Given the enormity of the undertaking, how long will he persevere? It is evident in his answer that he has not lost his sense of humor: "If people continue to lie and deceive, then I guess I'll be around to try to point out that they're lying and deceiving! I don't see myself, though, in a position of being the person that's going to be the ultimate authority on this."

That is good news for Wofford — were he to become the ultimate authority on the assassination, he would probably have little time left for teaching. As it stands, the Wofford community continues to benefit from his insightful and provocative stance on an important national issue.